

UFO SIGHTER

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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY GLEN BROCK

EXTRACTS FROM AN INTERVIEW
WITH RICK R. HILBERG

Edited and extracted by Allen H. Greenfield

Editor's note- The following material has been extracted from an interview dated April 29, 1970. The interview was conducted on tape at my home office. -- Allen H. Greenfield.

Greenfield: Mr. Hilberg, I wonder if you would describe how you got involved in the UFO field; what prompted your interest, and what you did in your early years in the field?

Hilberg: I suppose, quite candidly that my interest in the UFO field started, oh, around 1958 or 1959 when I was a member of the science fiction book club - as many of us are and have been - and I had an opportunity to receive for, I think for a dollar on one of these bargain offers from the club Ruppelt's first book, The Report On Unidentified Flying Objects. And I read the book. Up until that time I was quite skeptical about U.F.O.s; I tended to brush them off as nonsense. But after reading the book I said, "Well, there might be something to this whole mystery." and I started to follow U.F.O.s in the newspaper for awhile. Some of my friends were interested in U.F.O.s when I was in junior high school and, I guess, elementary school really. And we kind of got together now and then and compared our clippings. Some of us saved clippings and some of us had other books; I remember a friend of mine had a copy of one of Keyhoe's books; I imagine it was, maybe it was Flying Saucer Conspiracy; I'm not sure it was a paperback and we used to go into that. We'd go down to the rare book store in Cleveland, Kay's Books, and try to pick up some magazines and some books on U.F.O.s in the used book section, and we'd kind of like have little meetings now and then and go over things.

From about here, from about 1958 on to about 1960 it was just kind of a casual interest. In 1960 I met up with some other friends in Cleveland and we more or less - I guess the teen UFOlogy era was on - and quite independently of the others in the country, we formed our own group and started to place advertisements in Ray Palmer's Flying Saucers, and got a few members, and eventually purchased a spirit duplicator and went the whole route of the illiterate teen-aged saucerzines. From there on it just developed that the more people I met and talked to, the more books and clippings I acquired and the opportunity to do field investigations just gradually increased my knowledge of the subject until I was able to finally publish half-way decent material and do half-way decent investigations, probably somewhere around 1964 when the Socorro sighting first came up and the great interest in U.F.O.s developed.

Greenfield: Who, if anyone, had particular influence on you in the early years when you were in the field, either literary or personal?

Hilberg: It would have to be both. Literary influence, probably came from Keyhoe as I imagine most of the young UFOlogists of that

time experienced. His books were readily available at the libraries and on the newsstands, and he wrote in a very dramatic and interesting style which would catch a young reader's attention.

So, I imagine Keyhoe had a great amount of influence on me, and I went the whole NICAP route; I joined NICAP in about '61 and I think I'm still a member if the group is indeed alive.

Personally, one of the local Cleveland UFOlogists, Earl Neff, probably had a great deal of influence on me in those early years. Earl was doing radio and t.v. appearances and lectures, and he seemed to be at the time quite knowledgeable about the subject, and he was kind of a mentor to me for awhile. I did some of his leg work on some sightings and running down some material.

I never got any credit for it; I was kind of like one of his silent researchers I imagine other prominent people have, Ralph Nader probably being a prime example; he has, I know, runners all over the country tracking down bits of information for him.

I would say Earl Neff was a great influence upon me.

Greenfield: When did you first get involved with the Cleveland UFOlogy Project?

Hilberg: I got involved with the Cleveland UFOlogy Project about 1962, probably early in the year. I think I had heard about a U.F.O. report that was broadcast on WERE, one of the local radio stations. I called one of the newsmen and asked some further facts about the sighting, and he said, "Well, you'll have to call the gentleman who phoned in the report; he's from a local club, his name is Fred Sylvanus." and I called in Fred Sylvanus and he filled me in on the sighting and invited me down to the Cleveland UFOlogy Project meetings. They were held on, I don't know, the first or second Saturday of the month down at the main YMCA in Cleveland, a rather dreary place. But there were a lot of people. That's where I met Neff and Al Manak and a lot of the others, and I stayed in the C.U.P. until about 1966, if I remember correctly, and there was a split and I went off with Al Manak, Elmer Schutt and Ron Pelger and formed a Cleveland chapter of the now-defunct AMUFO.

Greenfield: Around 1962 or 1963-I don't know exactly how long it'd been on-KYW Radio, which was then in Cleveland had a program devoted to U.F.O.s on the air. I wonder whether that had any influence on you during that period?

Hilberg: It certainly did; I was an avid listener, and as I mentioned I was a big fan of Earl Neff's, and Earl was one of the regulars on the program. This was the Harv Morgan program. -- No. I take it back, it was called "Program PM", Harv Morgan was the host, and every Thursday night, I believe it was, there was the "UFOlogy Roundtable", and that's where all the UFOlogists got together and talked about U.F.O.s and talked about secrecy and NICAP and other good things. I was on the program quite early in my young UFOlogical career; I think it was on Thanksgiving, 1962, Thanksgiving Night, the first radio appearance I had ever had. I was there with Earl and I was kind of going the NICAP and APRO line and talking about the little dwarves (Hilberg mildly laughs-editor) and whatnot.

Greenfield: Around 1964 I suppose it was, at least that's my impression, the UFO field picked up after what may have been a rather considerable

lull. You got in during the period that can be described as the lull as I did; the period roughly between 1957 and 1964. How would you compare that period to now in terms of interest and organization in the U.F.O. field and so forth?

Hilberg: Right now we're not far from the state we were in around 1962, I'd say. We have a few reports coming in in the local newspapers, the same as it was in '62. We have certainly more UFO publications than we did then, although I fear many of them are dropping out slowly but surely.

So I think maybe in another six or seven months we should be back to about the same state as we were in '62; almost virtual collapse of the field as it is.

Greenfield: One thing that we did have during that period that I'm not so sure about now was a considerable teen UFOlogy movement. There were organizations like the Teen Bureau of Flying Saucers, etc., and I wonder if in your impression are we getting that same kind of grass roots material for the future now that we had then?

Hilberg: Yes, we're certainly getting a lot of grass roots support from the younger people; "Younger people", we're speaking as if we're 45 years old, we're only in our twenties, and barely out of the teenage stage ourselves, but there definitely are many many teenagers operating magazines and clubs around the country.

I think we are going to have possibly 95 percent of our literary UFOlogical endeavors run by teenagers within a very few months-- as strange as it may seem I think this is going to come about. I think that the teenagers today are much more literate and much more erudite than we were back in 1962. I definitely have to say that.

Greenfield: What got you involved in the organizational aspects of the UFO field; was it the "Saucer Club News" section of Flying Saucers (Hilberg: Yes.) or what?

Hilberg: Right. Everyone - got involved, I think, through the "Saucer Club News" section. That was the clearing house in those days for new clubs forming; "wanted"; for various personal-type ads,

Greenfield: I know you have participated in field investigations--this is sort of a complicated question, but in the early years did you participate in field investigations, and whenever you did start, what type of investigations did you participate in?

Hilberg: Well, I'm glad that I didn't really participate in any field investigations per se when I was younger, because I don't think young people really should. This sounds kind of bad, but I think the field investigations should be left open to people over 21; adults; responsible adults of legal age--and I think this is quite important from the legal standpoint and from an ethical standpoint.

As far as when did I really get involved in the nitty-gritty of it, probably about 1964, when I had a greater opportunity to get UFO reports into my office. I was able to subscribe to a clipping service that I know you were in on and Dale Rettig in Chicago, and if I saw a report from the local area I would go and investigate it.

Greenfield: What are we ultimately out to accomplish in the U.F.O.

field; what's our goal?

Hilberg: We've all in Ray Palmer's zine, many years ago I can remember us kids saying, "We should-- we are dedicated to the solution (Hilberg laughs slightly--editor) of the UFO mystery, and I imagine this is what we're still after--we want to know what they are, where they're from and who's in them or what's in them and--the whole bit.

I don't know whether we're ever going to find it. I would definitely like to find it sometime in my lifetime; it's quite possible and indeed it seems probable at this time that we won't know within our span of time on this world.

We should definitely push on, though; we're gaining more information every year, we're getting to know a little bit more about ourselves and about our history and on these two points I think it's benefiting us.

(end of extracts from Hilberg interview)

UFO PHOTOGRAPHY, PSYCHIC PHOTOGRAPHY AND FIELD RESEARCH by Allen H. Greenfield

Editor's note - This article owes a substantial literary debt to an earlier piece by the same writer, published in UFO Magazine. See note following the end of this article.

If we are to accept accounts of the matter, both UFO and psychic photography have been around for a long time. According to Master Guide To Psychism by Harriet A. Boswell (Parker Publishing Company, page 177) as I understand it, a psychic photograph was allegedly taken by a person named Mumler in Boston in 1862! UFO photography may go back to at least 1883, Zacatecas, Mexico. (See The INFO Journal, Fall, 1969, cover and pages 10-13.)

There may be a great possibility of fraud and mistake in both UFO and psychic photographic cases. However, this may be true in non-photographically-related cases in the UFO and psychic fields as well. Alleged UFO photographs may have contributed to a negative atmosphere about the subject among scientists, the press, and possibly the public at large. Whether this is true or not, it may also be true that a well-checked photo, such as the McMinnville, Oregon case, provides an impressive item of evidence. (See Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects, Edited by Daniel S. Gillmor, Bantam Books, pages 396-407; also see plates 23, 24, 25 and 26.)

Some example of "psychic" photos may be found in A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF MAGIC AND THE SUPERNATURAL, by Maurice Bessy (Spring Books), on pages 227-229. One might not a similarity between some of these photos (numbered 731, 736, 738, and 739) and photos and reports of UFOs. The two are not necessarily totally distinct phenomena.

In addition to actual photographs of UFO or psychic manifestations, on-the-scene research work might well include photography of witnesses and areas being researched. (Reference: A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore by Kenneth S. Goldstein, Folklore Associates, pages 124-125.) I have, myself, done some of this kind of work.

Three categories of UFO and psychic photographs might be these:

- (1) A manifestation is both seen and photographed.
- (2) A manifestation shows up on a photograph which was not seen at the time the photograph was taken, and was not anticipated.
- (3) A manifestation shows up on a photograph which was not seen at the time the photograph was taken, but which was either anticipated or aimed for. (Reference: The World of Ted Serios by Jules Eisenbud, M.D., Pocket Books; also see They Live in the Sky by Trevor James, Saucerian Books.)

Harriet A. Boswell's Master Guide to Psychism, mentioned above, has a chapter dealing with psychic photograph, pages 177-189.

While it's no secret that I have had some success with 'psychic' photography myself (Saucer News dated Spring-Summer, 1969: "The Ghost of Christ Church" by Allen H. Greenfield, pages 7-8; also "A Report on Investigations and Phenomena, St. Simons Island, Georgia" by Allen H. Greenfield, Alternate Horizons Newsletter, Volume Three, Number One, pages 5-7), I am not yet by any means convinced of the authenticity in every sense of the term with any UFO or psychic photo. This is possibly in tune with the fact that as of now I am not convinced of the authenticity of any UFO or psychic phenomenon. Perhaps "proof" exists and I am simply not aware of it. Perhaps it will become available in the future. But I urge caution in both conclusions and investigations in these areas. More about the latter - caution in investigations - later in this article.

I might not be a full-time professional photographer but I think I might have a considerable store of knowledge related to UFO and psychic photography which has come my way to some extent through actual testing in the field. If you as an individual are interested in possibly doing some experimentation in this area, you might try one of the following projects. But before you go dashing off into this, you might do well to read the rest of this article first.

(1) Random UFO Skywatch: With a good camera, high-speed film, and a telephoto lens, also a pair of binoculars, set up your skywatch at a good viewing location. Your first try might be from roughly an hour before sunset through an hour or two after sunset. Obtain necessary permission from property owners, etc. You might also check in with local police to let them know what you're doing and where you are in advance.

(2) Pinpoint UFO Skywatch: Somewhat on the order of the above, but at a location alleged to be a UFO-active locale.

(3) Haunted House Photography - I don't recall ever having worked with a haunted house as such, but I've come pretty close, and with "results". Again, obtain necessary permission, carry with you a camera with, perhaps, a wide-angle lens and Tri-X Kodak film, or you might

even try Kodak's 2475 Recording Film with your 35mm camera. I have not tried this latter film in the field yet except on a very limited basis and not in a haunted house. Actually, to date my experience with this film has been limited to a single roll used for star photography, with some considerable success. But stars aren't ghosts. Even if nothing is seen, take a few shots of the area or areas where the manifestation is supposed to become visible, or be heard. Take a few shots at random as well. If the phenomenon is not confined to any specific location, take a few shots at random. If you happen to "feel" like taking a photo of a certain area, go ahead. You might even try holding the camera loosely, finger lightly touching the button on the camera, moving the camera around in various directions. If the urge to snap a shot hits you, take it. Read below.

Now I'm going to say something that might seem superficially paradoxical: Don't take any of these projects too seriously as to results, but take the investigation extremely seriously.

I really don't know what the likelihood is that you would see a UFO, even in a UFO-prone area on a given day or night, or that you could successfully photograph it if you saw one. Nor do I know the odds on seeing and photographing "ghosts". The odds might vary from place to place and in some places they might be quite good. But even if you do see or photograph something, don't jump to conclusions about what it is you've seen and photographed. "Ghosts", whether there is anything at all to the phenomenon, are not necessarily proof of the survival of the departed. They could be mental projections. They could be optical illusions. They could be strange life forms from an alternate reality. They could be, after all, marsh gas. Or, Scrooge forgive us, stomach gas.

None of these phenomena, as far as I know as of now, are necessarily real. But, by the same token, none are necessarily unreal, and the reality behind spirits and UFOs, be they the same or different, might be of extreme importance, and your research, if it turns up anything, might be of enormous importance, or at the least a small contribution to the evidence.

But the reality might also be dangerous. Dangerous to you, dangerous to anyone who gets too close. There might be psychological dangers as well.

There can be perfectly physical dangers to the careless investigator as well. If you go around looking for phantoms in a strange town in the middle of the night, you're endangering your very life. Suppose, for example, you're mistaken for a prowler by a policeman or a nervous housewife with her husband's pistol. I don't think UFOlogy or parapsychology really need any martyrs. Don't become one.

I do advocate field investigations. I do advocate photographic experimentation in these areas. But I also advocate caution.

Editor's note- An article to which the above article owes a substantial literary debt written by me earlier and printed under

the title " A Brief Guide To UFO and Psychic-Related Photography" appeared in UFO Magazine, issue dated Winter 1969-1970. UFO Magazine, P.O. Box 2708, Cleveland, Ohio 44111.

In the article above reference is made to my Saucer News article, "The Ghost of Christ Church" (Saucer News, dated Spring-Summer, 1969, pages 7-8). Saucer News, P.O. Box 2228, Clarksburg, West Virginia 26301.

Other articles by the editor:

"A Brief Guide To UFO and Psychic-Related Photography", UFO Magazine, dated Winter 1969-1970, pages 5-6. UFO Magazine, P.O. Box 2708, Cleveland, Ohio 44111.

"A Historical Perspective on the 'Men in Black' Legend", UFO Chronolog, dated January-February, 1970, page 3. UFO Chronolog, 43 Richland Drive, Newport News, Virginia 23602.

Another of my articles in the Volume 1, Number 1 issue of UFO Commentary, 72 Jefferys Drive, Newport News, Virginia 23601.

You might write me if you're interested in receiving a free copy of the booklet " Extracts From Alternate Horizons Newsletter " at my home-mailing address: 2875 Sequoyah Drive NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30327. I don't guarantee one'll be sent, but if you're interested you might invest a postcard.

I don't guarantee, either, that the publishers listed above will have copies of the issues listed available, nor that the addresses are accurate (except possibly my own), but all of these publications might make worthy additions to your UFO library.

There's a thought -- or have I heard it somewhere before -- a "UFO library". Can't you see little blue beings secretly landing in the dead of night, behind all the major metropolitan libraries, and making off with copies of They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers, Portnoy's Complaint, or whatever they read up there (or is it down there -- or in there).

Two books that might be of interest: House on Fire by Arch Oboler; Bartholomew House Ltd. (fiction) and Flying Saucers Have Arrived; Jay David, editor; World Publishing Company.

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editor